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Borough of Dunstable

Annual Report

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

HAROLD N. LITTLE

M.A. ; B.Ch. (Cantab.) ; M.R.C.S. (Eng.) ;
L.R.C.P. (Lond.)

For the Year

1925

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.



May, 1926.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I have pleasure in submitting to you my Annual Report for the year ending December 31st, 1925.

This report is a Survey Report and is of a more comprehensive character than the Ordinary Reports for the past four years. In addition to statements on the Sanitary circumstances, Sanitary administration and Vital Statistics ; it will contain :—

- (1) An account of the measure of progress made during the preceding five years.
- (2) A summary of the changes made during that period in the Public Health services.
- (3) Statements of any further action, of importance in the organisation or development of the Public Health services considered necessary by me.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area, 802 acres.

Population (1921), 8,894.

„ (1925, estimated), 8,943.

Number of inhabited houses (1921), 2,200.

Number of families or separate occupiers (1921), 2,187.

Rateable value, £37,023.

Sum represented by a penny rate, £152.

PHYSICAL FEATURES AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE AREA.

The Borough of Dunstable is situate on the Southern border of Bedfordshire, thirty-three miles N.W.N. from London, and twenty miles S.W. from Bedford. The town occupies an important position on the Great North road that runs from London to Chester and Holyhead; this road is the ancient Roman Road or Watling Street. The height of the town is 488 feet above the sea level. The highest point close to Dunstable is upon Dunstable Downs near the junction of the Kensworth and Whipsnade Heath roads, where the height is 799 feet, the lowest point is in Dunstable Park at 472 feet.

Dunstable is built upon a layer of chalk; this chalk is 80 feet deep in the middle of the town and 130 feet deep in the Northern parts. As a result of this the town and hills are always practically dry even after the heaviest rainfalls.

The air is remarkably pure, no large factories are near enough to contaminate it with smoke and impurities.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

Dunstable is a country town and the centre of a large agricultural district. The occupations of the inhabitants are of a healthy character, and there are none which adversely affect the public health. During the last five years there has been little change in the social conditions. The chief occupations of the inhabitants are as follows :—

Printing and allied trades.

Straw work and other occupations connected with the hat industry.

Manufacturing of paper articles.

Foundry work and general engineering.

Lime and cement manufacturing.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Births :—

		Males.	Females.
Legitimate	... 129	75	54
Illegitimate	... 7	4	3

Birth rate for 1925 per thousand, 15·20.

Birth rate for previous years :—

1921	...	...	...	...	18·70
1922	...	...	...	...	15·49
1923	...	...	...	...	14·81
1924	...	...	...	...	15·41
1925	...	...	...	...	15·20

Deaths :—			Males.	Females.	Total.
All causes	...	...	56	67	123

Death rate 13·75.

Death rates for the past five years :—

1921	...	...	...	...	12·87
1922	...	...	...	...	13·71
1923	...	...	...	...	9·76
1924	...	...	...	...	10·97
1925	...	...	...	...	13·75

The causes of deaths were as follows :—

					Males.	Females.
Measles	...	...	...	...	—	1
Whooping-cough	...	...	...	...	1	—
Influenza	...	...	...	...	2	1
Tuberculosis—						
Pulmonary	...	...	...	...	4	2
Non-pulmonary	...	...	...	...	1	—
Cancer and Malignant disease	...	...	...	...	7	7
Rheumatic fever	...	...	...	...	—	1
Diabetes	...	...	...	...	1	1
Cerebral hæmorrhage, etc.	...	...	...	...	3	7
Heart disease	...	...	...	...	5	11
Arterio-sclerosis	...	...	...	...	1	2
Bronchitis	...	...	...	...	6	7
Pneumonia (all forms)	...	...	...	...	2	1
Other respiratory diseases	...	...	...	...	2	1
Diarrhœa, etc. (under two years)	...	...	...	...	1	1
Appendicitis and typhlitis	...	...	...	...	2	—
Cirrhosis of liver	...	...	...	...	1	—
Acute and chronic nephritis	...	...	...	...	1	1
Congenital debility and malformation,						
premature birth	...	...	...	...	3	—
Deaths from violence	...	...	...	...	2	—
Other defined diseases	...	...	...	...	11	23

INFANT MORTALITY.

Deaths of infants under one year of age :—

Legitimate	...	...	...	7
Illegitimate	...	...	...	Nil

Infantile death rate per thousand births, 51·47.

Infantile death rate for the past five years :—

1921	...	...	...	...	71·85
1922	...	...	...	...	93·52
1923	...	...	...	...	30·30
1924	...	...	...	...	65·21
1925	...	...	...	...	51·47

POOR LAW RELIEF.

This is administered through the Luton Guardians. Gratuitous medical relief is made use of to a large extent by the old age pensioners of the district, and to a smaller extent by others. The amount of this has not varied greatly during the past five years.

There have been no cases of sickness or invalidity specially noteworthy during the period under review: the town has in common with the country generally shared in mild Influenza epidemics.

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE AREA.

HOSPITALS PROVIDED OR SUBSIDIZED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY OR THE COUNTY COUNCIL.

- (a) *Tuberculosis.* The County Council make provision for in-patient treatment of persons suffering from this disease in various Sanatoria, both in the county and elsewhere.
- (b) *Maternity.* There is no maternity hospital, nor are beds available for such cases in the Borough.
- (c) *Children.* There is no hospital for admission of children other than those suffering from infectious disease.
- (d) *Fever.* The fever hospital known as the Dunstable Joint Isolation Hospital is situated just outside the Borough. It is administered by a committee elected by your council and by two other bodies. The patients are paid for by the respective Authorities from whose districts

they are admitted. The general expenses are shared by the three bodies in proportion to the Rateable value of each district.

- (e) *Small-pox.* Beds are available in the fever hospital but there have not been any cases during the period under review.

There is no institutional provision for unmarried mothers, illegitimate infants or homeless children in the area.

AMBULANCE FACILITIES.

- (a) For infectious cases.
- (b) For non-infectious cases and accident cases.

A motor ambulance is kept at the Joint Isolation Hospital and is controlled by the hospital committee. It is available both for infectious and non-infectious cases which is not an ideal arrangement. This ambulance can be summoned for any urgent case in the Dunstable or surrounding district, and payment is on a mileage basis.

CLINICS AND TREATMENT CENTRES.

- (a) *Maternity and child welfare.* A centre exists in the Borough under the control of a ladies committee which is subsidized by the County Council.
- (b) *Day Nurseries.* None exist in the Borough.
- (c) *School Clinics.* Arrangements are made by the County Council for the periodic inspection of school children both by a medical officer and an appointed dentist.
- (d) *Tuberculosis Dispensary.* The nearest dispensary is in Luton, under the control of the County Council. Any inhabitant is at liberty to go to this centre for advice with or without the recommendation of their medical attendant.
- (e) *Treatment for Venereal Disease.* Clinics for the treatment of these diseases are held both at Luton and Bedford on certain specified days.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY.

There are two Public Health Officials:—

- (1) A part time Medical Officer of Health.
- (2) A part time Sanitary Inspector, who also holds the appointment of Borough Surveyor.

PROFESSIONAL NURSING IN THE HOME.

- (a) *General.* There is one district nurse supported by voluntary contributions through a nurses fund and controlled by an honorary committee in the town.

There is also a Health visitor supplied by the County Council who visits maternity cases and gives advice where necessary.

- (b) *For Infectious Diseases.* There is no nurse for this purpose as the district nurse is not allowed to attend.

MIDWIVES.

There are two midwives practising in the town. Neither of these are employed by or subsidized by the Local Authority.

CHEMICAL WORK.

All chemical work has been done by the County Council.

LEGISLATION IN FORCE.

- (a) Local Acts. Nil.
- (b) Special Local Orders. Nil.
- (c) General Adoptive Acts and Bye-Laws.
 - (1) Part 3 of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1890.
 - (2) The Infectious Diseases Notification Act.
 - (3) The Infectious Diseases Prevention Act.
 - (4) Regulations under the Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Order, 1885-6.

Regulations re offensive trades. These were under consideration at the end of the year, 1925.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

WATER.

The water supply to the town is sufficient and pure in quality. It is supplied by water works situated in the Southern part of the Borough. The supply is constant, and feeds the whole population directly to the houses. There are, however, a few stand pipes. The water is obtained from deep wells on Half Moon Hill. The

wells are sunk to the base of the chalk-marl, at the bottom of the lower chalk. The water, having been filtered naturally through the great depth of chalk, flows from the wells in a state of high purity and excellent quality. It is quite free from all contamination, and is of moderate hardness. The water is distributed by iron piping, and this eliminates any chance of plumpo-solvent action.

Since the last Survey Report, a new water tower has been constructed. This tower maintains a sufficient pressure of water even in the highest parts of the town.

RIVERS AND STREAMS.

None exist in the Borough.

DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.

On the whole the arrangements for drainage, sewerage and sewage disposal are satisfactory. There is main drainage for the whole Borough except for the houses in Capron Road, which have dome-wells. However, a sewer has recently been laid in this road, and will shortly be connected up to the houses.

CLOSET ACCOMMODATION.

The whole town is supplied with water-closets, except a field which has three earth privies.

SMOKE ABATEMENT.

The Borough and neighbourhood are remarkably free from smoke, and it has not been necessary to take any action.

PREMISES AND OCCUPATIONS WHICH CAN BE CONTROLLED BY BYE-LAWS OR REGULATIONS.

During the past five years there have been no bye-laws or regulations in force for this purpose. There are no common lodging houses or underground sleeping rooms in the Borough.

The only alleged offensive occupations are :—

- (1) Collection and storage of rags, bones, etc.
- (2) Fish frying.

Bye-laws to deal with these two occupations are now in consideration.

SCHOOLS.

Regular inspection of the sanitary conditions and water supply of the schools have been made and found satisfactory, with one exception, namely that at the Grammar School a short length of drain pipe was found to have been broken by a sinkage in the ground. This was relaid and made good.

DOME-WELLS.

Complaints of full dome-wells have been negligible during the year.

A sewer was laid in Capron Road during the latter part of the year. This road is entirely drained into dome-wells, and no doubt the premises in this road will be connected to the sewer at an early date.

VAN DWELLERS.

Numerous complaints of people living in caravans and occupying the field known as Kent's Meadow were received.

A notice requiring Lavatory and Sink accommodation was, by resolution of the Council, served on the owner. This notice had not expired at the end of the year.

SCAVENGING.

The House Refuse is collected once a week, and is carted to a shoot about a mile away from the town.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE DISTRICT.

The following inspections have been made :—

(1) <i>Re</i> Condition of premises	...	...	130
(2) For Nuisances	...	...	53
(3) After Infectious Diseases	...	...	24
(4) <i>Re</i> Drains	...	...	46
(5) <i>Re</i> Works in progress	...	...	171
(6) <i>Re</i> Full Dome-wells	...	...	3
(7) <i>Re</i> Ash-pits and Ash-bins	...	...	62
(8) Of Slaughterhouses	...	...	34
(9) Of Bakehouses	...	...	27
(10) Of Dairies	...	...	49

NOTICES SERVED.

Housing, Town Planning, etc., Acts	...	22
Public Health Acts formal	... ..	44
" " " informal	... ..	36
" " " for Ash-bins	... ..	85

HOUSING.**GENERAL HOUSING CONDITIONS IN THE AREA.**

(1) General housing conditions are satisfactory. There are in the Borough a considerable number of old houses, which have low ceilings, small windows and insufficient ventilation. There are no back to back houses or other types of insanitary property.

(2) A—There is a shortage of houses to a moderate extent.

B—During the past five years 68 new houses have been erected by the Council to deal with the shortage, and it is expected that 30 more houses will be erected in the near future.

(3) There have been no important changes in the population during the period under review, and none is anticipated in the near future.

OVERCROWDING.

There is very little real overcrowding in the Borough. It has been necessary to deal with four cases only. These were allowed to move into Council Houses.

FITNESS OF HOUSES.

(1) The general standard of housing in the area is good. The chief defects found in unfit houses have been dirtiness of walls and ceilings.

(2) It has been necessary to take proceedings under the Housing Acts and the Public Health Acts in certain cases. Details of these are included in the Statistical Report below.

(3) No special difficulties have been met with in remedying unfitness, and none call for special mention.

(4) Water supply, closet accommodation, refuse disposal. It has not been necessary to take any action with regard to water supply. For refuse disposal a large number of dust-bins have been provided in place of ash-pits, boxes, etc.

UNHEALTHY AREAS.

There are none within the precincts of the Borough.

NEW HOUSES ERECTED DURING THE YEAR.

(a) Total	...	...	...	...	...	42
(b) With State assistance under the Housing Acts, 1919, 1923 or 1924—						
(i) By the Local Authority	...	...	...	...	...	18
(ii) By other bodies or persons	...	...	...	...	...	20

In addition to the above a total of nine were in course of erection at the end of the year, of which 7 were under (b) (ii).

UNFIT DWELLING HOUSES.*Inspection.*

(1) Total number of dwelling houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	...	...	...	...	102
(2) Number of dwelling houses which were inspected under the Housing Regulations or Housing Consolidated Regulations	...	...	...	...	42
(3) Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	...	...	...	...	Nil
(4) Number of dwelling houses (exclusive of those referred to under the previous sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation	...	...	...	...	66

REMEDY OF DEFECTS WITHOUT SERVICE OF FORMAL NOTICES.

Number of defective dwelling houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by Local Authority or their Officers	11
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ACTION UNDER STATUTORY POWERS.**A. Proceedings under Section 3 of the Housing Act, 1925.**

(1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Notices were served requiring repairs	24
---	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	----

- (2) Number of dwelling houses which were rendered fit after service of formal notices :
- | | |
|--|-----|
| (a) by Owners | 20 |
| (b) by Local Authority in default of Owners | Nil |
- (3) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close Nil

B. Proceedings under Public Health Acts.

- (1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied 73
- (2) Number of houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices :
- | | |
|--|-----|
| (a) by Owners | 63 |
| (b) by Local Authority in default of Owners | Nil |

C. Proceedings under Sections 11, 14, and 15 of the Housing Act, 1925.

- (1) Number of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders ... Nil
- (2) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made ... Nil
- (3) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the dwelling houses having been rendered fit Nil
- (4) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made ... Nil
- (5) Number of dwelling houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders Nil

FACTORY ACTS.

Factories, Workshops and Workplaces.—These premises are periodically inspected and found to be kept in a clean state. No complaints of dirty walls or bad ventilation have arisen, and the conditions generally are satisfactory. Insufficient Lavatory accommodation was, in two cases found to exist. In one case this will be remedied now the sewer is laid in the road, while in the other case, further accommodation is being provided in an extension now being carried out.

MILK SUPPLY.

The greater portion of the milk supplied within the Borough is produced outside, and brought in by the Dairymen themselves.

The few Cows kept in the town are kept out during the major part of the year. The cowsheds are kept in a generally clean condition.

The Dairies and Milk-shops are kept in a clean condition and the cans and other utensils regularly cleaned.

No licenses have been applied for, for the sale of milk under special designations.

MEAT.

The Slaughterhouses in the Borough are as follows :—

		1920.	Jan., 1925.	Dec., 1925.
Registered	...	6	6	6
Licensed	...	1	2	2
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	...	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>

There is no public Slaughterhouse.

Some of the Slaughterhouses have been in existence many years, but are kept in as cleanly a condition as is possible. The more recently and substantially erected ones are kept clean.

The beasts killed appear to be generally sound and in good condition.

Meat exposed in shops is protected by glass windows. Only one stall is used for the sale of meat, and this is satisfactorily enclosed.

The cartage of the carcasses through the streets has been satisfactorily carried out. In two or three cases where there was slackness, a verbal warning was sufficient to obtain improvement in the wrapping of the carcase or portion of such.

Meat, etc., condemned during the year was as follows :—

BEEF.	OX KIDNEY.	FISH.
90 lbs.	13 lbs.	6 Stones.

BAKEHOUSES AND FOOD FACTORIES.

There are two underground Bakehouses which are kept in a clean condition.

All the remainder are satisfactory.

OFFENSIVE TRADES.

A number of complaints were received of a nuisance caused by the storage of raw bones, etc. The matter was taken up by the Council and conditions were improved.

During the last few weeks of the year an Order was granted declaring the trade of a Rag and Bone Dealer to be an offensive trade within the Borough, and an application was made for a further order declaring the trade of a Fish Fryer to come under the same category.

As soon as this is granted, Bye-laws will be framed to deal with both these trades.

PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925
Diphtheria	33	5	5	14	10
Scarlet Fever	9	7	—	4	2
Enteric Fever (including para typhoid)	1	—	—	1	—
Puerperal Fever	—	—	1	—	—
Erysipelas	4	1	1	1	—

The above table shows the incidence of Infectious Diseases during the last five years. It will be seen, that the town has been particularly free during the years under review. Most cases have occurred sporadically and, save in 1921, there has been nothing approaching an epidemic. There are no noteworthy facts as to the source or spread of infection to be recorded.

Diphtheria antitoxin.—A supply of this is always kept in the town, and is available for use at any time.

No cases of Small-pox, Malaria, Dysentery, Trench Fever or Encephalitis Lethargica have been notified.

Three cases of Pneumonia have been notified during the five years, while a review of the death certificates shows that there have been twelve deaths from this disease. It is perhaps not fully realised by the Medical Practitioners in the Borough that Pneumonia is a notifiable disease.

With regard to Scarlet Fever, no “return” cases have been noted during the period.

Arrangements exist for the examination of Pathological and Bacteriological Specimens by the Clinical Research Association. These arrangements are made use of by the Doctors in the town, especially in connection with the Bacteriological examination for Diphtheria.

The Schick and Dick Tests in Diphtheria and Scarlet Fever respectively, and the recently developed artificial immunization against these diseases have not been made use of in this town, and there has not been any special call for their use up to the present.

Vaccination.—No vaccinations have been performed by the Medical Officer of Health under the Public Health (Small-pox prevention) Regulations 1917. All vaccinations have been performed by either the Public Vaccinator or other Doctors.

NON-NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

Measles, Chicken-pox and Mumps.—There have been slight epidemics of these during the period under consideration. These epidemics do not call for any special remarks, and no action was taken by the Medical Officer of Health with regard to these.

Influenza.—During the past five years the Influenza epidemics in the town, although widespread, were not of a virulent type. The number of deaths recorded as directly attributable to the disease is small. It must be remembered that death is generally due to the complications and sequelæ of this disease, so that the table below which shows the mortality from Influenza during the past three years is quite misleading.

				Males.	Females.
1923	...	...	...	2	1
1924	...	...	...	—	1
1925	...	...	...	2	1

There are no statistics to show to what extent such morbid sequelæ as Pneumonia, Tuberculosis, Bronchitis, Meningitis, Ear-disease, etc., follow the attacks.

No special enquiries were undertaken in connection with these epidemics.

CLEANSING AND DISINFECTION.

The disinfection of premises in which there have been cases of notifiable infectious disease is carried out by the Sanitary Inspector. Articles such as bedding, blankets, etc., are removed to the Isolation Hospital and are there sterilized.

Verminous persons can be cleansed and disinfected at the Infirmary at Luton.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES (other than Tuberculosis) during the year 1925.

Disease.	Total cases Notified.	Cases admitted to Hospital.	Total deaths.
Small-pox	—	—	—
Scarlet Fever	2	1	—
Diphtheria	10	9	—
Enteric Fever (including para typhoid)	—	—	—
Puerperal Fever	—	—	—
Pneumonia	1	—	3

The ages of the notified cases of Diphtheria are as follows :—

8 males aged 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13 and 15 years.

2 females aged 4 and 12 years.

The ages of cases of Scarlet Fever are :—

No males.

2 females, aged 4 and 12 years.

TUBERCULOSIS.

New cases and mortality during 1925 :—

Age Periods.	New cases.				Deaths.			
	Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.		Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
5	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15	2	2	2	—	2	1	1	—
20	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
25	2	2	—	—	1	—	—	—
35	2	2	—	—	—	1	—	—
45	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
55	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
& upwards								
TOTALS...	7	8	5	0	4	2	1	0

PUBLIC HEALTH (Prevention of Tuberculosis) REGULATIONS, 1925.

There have been no cases of Tuberculous employees in the milk trade within the Borough.

PUBLIC HEALTH ACT 1925, SECTION 62.

No action was taken by the Council under this section during 1925.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

HAROLD N. LITTLE,

Medical Officer of Health.

May, 1926.

